



little brown bat

Myotis lucifugus

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
Class: Mammalia
Order: Chiroptera
Family: Vespertilionidae

Features

The little brown bat is three to 3 3/4 inches long, including a tail that's 1 1/4 to 1 3/4 inches. It has shiny brown fur with black roots. The wings and ears are dark brown. The belly is lighter than the back. Each wing is attached along the side of the foot. This small bat has medium-sized ears, each with a round tragus (membranous projection).

Natural History

The little brown bat lives in a deep cave or mine where the temperature remains above freezing in the winter. An attic, steeple, or any building near a wooded area is the preferred habitat in the summer. It eats insects - mostly moths, caddisflies, leafhoppers, planthoppers, and beetle larvae. Mosquitoes may be an important food when other insects aren't available. It can catch a large number of insects in a short time and is able to digest the food within an hour. It emerges at dusk to feed, often over water or in clearings. These bats form colonies when hibernating. Winter colonies include males, females, and young. Wintering little brown

bats awaken every two or three weeks to excrete wastes. Mating occurs in the fall, winter, or spring. Females that mate in fall and winter store the sperm in the uterus until spring, when egg fertilization occurs. Females move to their summer quarters in April. Here they will establish maternity colonies. Males move into separate colonies in May or June. The gestation period is between 50 and 60 days. Young are born from May through early July. Usually only one young is born per female. During the first week after birth, the female takes the young bat with her while flying. After that time she leaves it in the maternity colony when she searches for food. A young bat can fly at the age of about one month. When the young bats leave the maternity colony, the adults usually go too, spreading through several habitats until entering the winter colony. The little brown bat is known to live 11 years and may live longer. It is one of Iowa's most common bats.

Habitats

Mississippi River; Missouri River; bottomland forests; interior rivers and streams

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.